

Spiritual Practice: Routines and Winks

I value predictable routines. But I also appreciate the freedom for spontaneity.

Adhering to established routines allows me to focus limited time on the task at hand rather than planning or prepping for the process. Plus, I'm more inclined to stay on track and live up to commitments. Being habitual about regular routines allows me to be open to spur-of-the-moment actions. I continually work to balance my comfort of order and my "squirrel" moments of distraction or FOMO (fear of missing out). While once a struggle, I now embrace managing the balance, especially pertaining to my spiritual practice.

My routine spiritual practice includes devotional readings, worship services, and participation in church choir. Similar to a pep talk from the coach before a game or from a leader when kicking off a project, these routine activities help me refocus my thoughts and actions for what I interpret as God's desire. I feel grounded with structured prayer and intentional contemplation about what I've read or heard or sang. As an example, years ago I learned a routine of using my fingers to categorize five types of prayer. Starting with the thumb, each finger prompts me for deliberate prayer.

1. Praise and adoration (*Awesome God, ...*)
2. Thanksgiving (*Thank you, God, ...*)
3. Intercession for specific needs of others (*God, help ___ with ...*)
4. Petition for myself (*God, help me ...*)
5. Confession (*I'm sorry, God, for ...*)

The impromptu spiritual practice comes into play when I link routine actions with spontaneous experiences. A friend once labeled these types of moments as "God winks," meaning a time that I feel God is specifically directing my attention to something. While I'm not always certain that I have clarity about the what and the why of each moment, these are a few examples of when I feel moved by God.

- The sight and sound of an active emergency vehicle triggers a prayer for those involved, their families, and people within the vehicle's path.
- As a song or phrase repeats in my mind, I aspire to center my attention on what the particular words mean for me now.
- When thoughts of an individual come to mind out of the blue, I've recently adopted the practice to pray for that individual and reach out to the person, as practical, with a message or phone call to let him or her know that s/he has been on my mind.
- I take an intentional, quiet deep breath before silently praying for those around me when in a group, such as during worship services or at a concert, in a restaurant or a grocery store checkout line, or when using public transportation.



I'm a work in progress, continually transforming my spiritual practice, and I welcome ideas from others.

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